

## **IN THE CLAIMS**

1. (Currently Amended) A method of transferring blanks, on a packing machine, from a platform (16) supporting a number of blanks (2) divided into stacks (5), to a store (10) where the blanks (2) are packed successively and seamlessly along a first supply path (P1) of a pickup station (S1) of the packing machine; the method comprising the steps of ~~being characterized by~~

forming, at a loading station (S3) and by means of at least one gripping device (14, 15), a group (13) of blanks defined by at least two stacks (5) superimposed and aligned in a container (12);

feeding the container (12) along a second path (P2) to an unloading station (S2) at the store (10);

and transferring ~~the~~ said group (13) of blanks all together from the container (12) to the store (10).

2. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the blanks (2) in said store (10) and in said container (12) at the unloading station (S2) extend perpendicularly to a first direction (D1), and the blanks (2) on said platform (16) and in said container (12) at the loading station (S3) extend perpendicularly to a second direction (D2) crosswise to the first direction (D1); ~~the method providing including for~~ and guiding the travel of said container (12) to alter the orientation of the container (12) and of the group (13) of blanks during transfer along said second path (P2).

3. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in Claim 2, wherein the container (12) is fed along said second path (P2) comprises along a first portion parallel to the first direction (D1), and along a second portion parallel to said second direction (D2).

4. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in Claim 3, wherein the container (12) is fed from said loading station (S3) ~~is located along said second portion, and to said unloading station (S2) is located along said first portion.~~

5. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in Claim 4, wherein the container (12) is fed along a portion (T) of said second path (P2), which overlaps said first path (P1) is and along a the first and second path (P1, P2) overlap along a portion (T) parallel to said first direction (D1); said and faces said unloading station (S2) being located along said portion (T).

6. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein comprising determining the position of the blanks (2) in each stack (5) with respect to a reference system ~~is determined by means of~~ a transfer member (68) of the gripping device (15) as said transfer member (68) is transferred from the platform (16) to said loading station (S3).

7. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in Claim 6, wherein comprising locating the reference system ~~is located~~ on said transfer member (68) ~~by and comprises~~ walls (71).

8. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in Claim 6, ~~wherein~~  
comprising aligning any misaligned the blanks (2) ~~of in said~~ stacks (5) ~~having~~  
~~misaligned blanks (2) are aligned by means of said transfer member (68).~~

9. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in Claim 6, ~~wherein the~~  
~~stacks (5) whose~~ comprising rejecting blanks (2) ~~are not aligned are rejected in~~  
said stacks by said gripping device (15).

10. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in Claim 1, ~~wherein~~  
comprising finding the blanks (2) in said store (10) ~~are fed~~ along said first path  
(P1), and supporting said blanks (2) ~~are supported by means of~~ a supporting wall  
(25) parallel to said blanks (2) and movable along the first path (P1).

11. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in Claim 10,  
wherein said blanks (2) are fed by ~~means of~~ a conveyor (17); said supporting  
wall (25) being activated by an actuator (24) controlled independently by the  
conveyor (17).

12. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in Claim 10, comprising  
activating, 8, ~~wherein~~ said supporting wall (25) ~~is activated~~ by an actuator (24)  
as a function of the pressure ~~exchanged~~ between the supporting wall (25) and  
the blanks (2) in the store (10).

13. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in Claim 1, ~~wherein the~~

comprising moving a supporting wall (25) is moved from a work position in which the supporting wall (25) is located along the first path (P1), to a rest position in which said supporting wall (25) is located alongside said first path (P1).

14. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in Claim 13, ~~wherein~~ comprising setting said supporting wall (25) ~~is set~~ to the rest position when said group (13) of blanks is fed into the unloading station (S2) and exerts a given pressure on said supporting wall (25).

15. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in Claim 14, ~~wherein~~ comprising moving the supporting wall (25) ~~is moved~~ in the first direction (D1) upstream from the group (13) of blanks, while maintaining said supporting wall (25) in the rest position; the supporting wall (25) being moved into the work position; and the supporting wall is brought into contact with the group (13) of blanks.

16. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in Claim 1, ~~wherein~~ comprising transferring each stack (5) ~~is transferred~~ from said platform (16) to said container (12) along a plane (PA) and without changing the level of the stack (5).

17. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in Claim 16, wherein the stacks (5) on said platform (16) are arranged side by side to form superimposed

layers (6); the method further comprising moving said platform (16) vertically so that, each time, the top layer (6) lies in said plane (PA).

18. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in Claim 16, ~~wherein~~ comprising moving said container (12) ~~is moved~~ so that a surface supporting the stacks (5) in said container (12) lies in said plane (PA).

19. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in Claim 18, ~~wherein said surface~~ comprising supporting the stacks (5) ~~is defined~~ by a wall (39) of said container (12) or by the top blank (2) in the top stack (5) housed in the container (12).

20) A method as claimed in Claim 1, ~~wherein the 16,~~ comprising moving a transfer member (68) of said gripping device (15) ~~is moved~~ along said plane (PA).

21. (Original) A method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein transfer from said platform (16) to said container (12) comprises picking up each stack (5) by means of a gripper (64) of a first gripping device (14), and transferring said stack (5) from said gripper (64) to a transfer member (68) of a second gripping device (15); said gripper (64) picking up the stacks (5) off said platform (16); and said transfer member (68) placing the stacks (5) inside said container (12).

22. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in Claim 1, ~~wherein~~ comprising arranging the stacks (5) of blanks on said platform (16) ~~are arranged~~

side by side to form layers (6); each layer (6) being defined by an M number of stacks (5) of blanks; said group (13) being defined by an N number of stacks (5) of blanks; and the M number being a whole multiple of N.

23. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein a transfer unit (11) ~~comprises~~ is formed by the platform (16) for supporting a number of blanks (2) divided into stacks (5), and at least one transfer device (14, 15) for transferring said stacks (5) of blanks from the platform (16) to the store (10), wherein the blanks (2) are packed successively and seamlessly and aligned along the first supply path (P1) of a the pickup station (S1) of the packing machine (1); the transfer unit (11) also comprising the container (12) for housing a the group of blanks (2) defined by at least two aligned and superimposed stacks (5), and which is movable along the second path (P2) between the loading station (S3) at said gripping device (14, 15) and ~~an~~ the unloading station (S2) at said store (10).

24. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in Claim 23, wherein the blanks (2) in said store (10) and in said container (12) at the unloading station (S2) extend perpendicularly to a first direction (D1), and the blanks (2) on said platform (16) and in said container (12) at the loading station (S3) extend perpendicularly to a second direction (D2) crosswise to the first direction (D1); the transfer unit (11) ~~comprising~~ having a guide (33) parallel to the second path (P2) ~~and~~ for guiding said container (12) and altering the

orientation of the container (12) and the group (13) of blanks during transfer along said second path (P2).

25. (Currently Amended) A method as in Claim 24, ~~wherein~~ comprising forming said guide (33) ~~comprises with~~ a first portion (34) parallel to the first direction (D1), a second portion (35) parallel to said second direction (D2), and a curved portion (36) connecting the first and second portion (34, 35).

26. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in Claim 25, ~~wherein~~ comprising locating said loading station (S3) ~~is located~~ along the second portion (35) of the guide, and said unloading station (S2) ~~is located~~ along said first portion (34) of the guide.

27. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in Claim 26, ~~wherein~~ comprising overlapping the first and second path (P1, P2) ~~overlap~~ along a portion (T) parallel to the first direction (D1); said unloading station (S2) being located along said portion (T); said first path (P1) being defined by a conveyor (17) with belts (18); and said container (12) being mounted on a carriage (32) insertable between the belts (18) along said portion (T).

28. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in Claim 23, ~~comprising a gripping device (15) for feeding said stacks (5) of blanks to said container (12); the~~ by a transfer member (68) of a gripping device (15) ~~comprising a transfer member (68).~~

29. (Currently Amended)            A method as claimed in Claim 28, comprising providing a further gripping device (14) for transferring said stacks (5) of blanks from said platform (16) to the gripping device (15); said further gripping device (14) comprising a gripper (64) for inserting a stack (5) of blanks into said transfer member (68).

30. (Currently Amended)            A method as claimed in Claim 28, ~~wherein~~ comprising providing said transfer member (68) ~~comprises with~~ a reference system and control members (76, 77) for determining the position of the blanks (2) in each stack (5) in said transfer member (68).

31. (Currently Amended)            A method as claimed in Claim 30, ~~wherein~~ comprising providing said reference system ~~comprises with~~ two lateral walls (71) maintained parallel to each other by said control members (76, 77), which comprise elastic means (76), and sensors (77) for detecting deformation of the elastic means (76).

32. (Previously Presented)            A method as claimed in Claim 31, wherein, under the action of said elastic means (76), said lateral walls (71) exert a compression force on the stack (5) of blanks positioned incorrectly in said transfer member (68); said compression force aligning the stack (5) or the blanks (2) with respect to the reference system.

33. (Currently Amended)            A method as claimed in Claim 31,



~~wherein comprising providing movement of~~ said gripping device (15) ~~is movable~~ between a receiving position, a transfer position to transfer the stack (5) of blanks to said container (12), and a reject position (E) to reject the stacks (5) of blanks not aligned to the reference system or containing blanks (2) not aligned to the reference system.

34. (Currently Amended) A unit A method as claimed in ~~any one of Claims 29 to 33, wherein claim 29, providing~~ said gripping device (15) and said further gripping device (14) ~~comprise~~ with respective means (76, 63) for moving said transfer member (68) and said gripper (64) along a plane (PA).

35. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in Claim 34, ~~wherein comprising arranging~~ the stacks (5) on said platform (16) ~~are arranged~~ side by side to form superimposed layers (6); and providing said platform (16) ~~comprising with~~ a lifting device (62) for moving said platform (16) vertically, and with a level sensor (SL) for positioning the top layer (6), each time, in said plane (PA).

36. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in Claim 23, comprising ~~feeding means (51)~~ for positioning said container (12) along said guide (33), and for so positioning the container (12) at the loading station (S3) as to define a surface for supporting the stacks (5) in said container (12) and lying in said plane (PA).

37. (Currently Amended)            A method as claimed in Claim 36,  
~~wherein~~ comprising providing said container (12) ~~comprises with~~ a first wall  
(39); said surface for supporting the stacks (5) being defined by said first wall  
(39) when said container (12) is empty; and said surface for supporting the  
stacks being defined by the top blank (2) in said container (12) when the  
container (12) is partly filled.

38. (Currently Amended)            A method as claimed in Claim 23,  
~~wherein the blank~~ comprising providing the store ~~comprises with~~ a push device  
(20) having a supporting wall (25) perpendicular to said first path (P1) and  
movable along said first path (P1) to support the blanks (2) in said store (10).

39. (Currently Amended)            A method as claimed in Claim 38,  
comprising ~~a conveyor (17) on which~~ positioning said blanks (2) ~~are positioned in~~  
a conveyor on edge; ~~the push device (20) comprising an actuator (24) for and~~  
feeding said supporting wall (25) along the first path (P1) independently of said  
conveyor (17).

40. (Currently Amended)            A method as claimed in Claim 39,  
~~wherein~~ comprising providing said push device (20) ~~comprises with~~ detecting  
means (26, 27, 28) for detecting the pressure exerted on said supporting wall  
(25) in said first direction (D1); ~~said actuator (24) being controlled~~ and controlling  
said supporting wall as a function of said pressure.

41. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed Claim 38, wherein ~~comprising~~ providing said push device (20) ~~comprises~~ with a further actuator (31) for rotating the supporting wall (25) between a work position in which the supporting wall (25) is located along said first path (P1), and a rest position in which said supporting wall (25) is located alongside said first path (P1).

Add the following new claims:

42. (New) A method as claimed in claim 1, comprising applying pressure to the back of the rearmost stack of blanks at said store to urge the stacks in said group forwardly and removing the frontmost blanks one blank at a time from the group.